



Council 4 AFSCME Testimony  
Labor Committee  
February 16, 2016

## **Support for SB 66, Paid Sick Leave for Paraprofessionals**

My name is Brian Anderson. I am a lobbyist for Council 4 AFSCME, a union of 34,000 Connecticut public and private employee members.

**Council 4 supports** S.B. No. 66 (RAISED) AN ACT EXTENDING PAID SICK LEAVE TO SCHOOL PARAPROFESSIONALS.

Children often come to school sick. Children unwittingly spread sickness to other children and school workers. Paraprofessionals work particularly close with children. Paraprofessionals dread the thought that they could ever spread sickness to one of our students by coming into school when we are sick. Paraprofessionals are at the lower end of the pay scale. Many paraprofessionals make as little as \$16,000 per year and often qualify for state assistance. Many of my fellow paraprofessionals cannot afford to miss a day's work. A sick worker pushing the limit could unintentionally spread the flu or other ailment to children. The child could then spread it to their families and other children. Unfortunately, Connecticut paraprofessionals do not currently get paid sick days under our state law.

This is a serious matter. **We submit a fact sheet from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services concerning the deadly avian flu. It says "The Centers for Disease Control ... and other leading public health experts agree that it is not a question of IF a pandemic will occur, but WHEN it will occur." It goes on to say in comparing an avian flu outbreak to the 1918-1919 flu pandemic that "if a pandemic of similar severity occurred today,... two million Americans could die."** This bill will safeguard school children, their families, school workers and the general public

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.